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SUBJECT: MEDIA REACTION: IRAN, CLINTON, PROTECTIONISM, MUSLIMS,
GITMO, RUSSIAN ECONOMY, TURKEY-ISRAEL, POPE

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- [1](#)1. Lead Stories Summary

Editorials focused on Chancellor Merkel's call on the Pope to make clear his position on the Holocaust and the eavesdropping affair with Deutsche Bahn. ZDF-TV's early evening newscast Heute opened with reports on warning strikes in the public service in Lower Saxony, while ARD-TV's early evening newscast Tagesschau opened with a report on Chancellor Merkel's call on the Pope for a "very clear" rejection of the Holocaust denial.

- [1](#)2. Iran Launches Satellite

Berliner Zeitung's editorial headlined "Iran conquers space and irritates the West," and added: "Iran reached this success despite the UN embargo. If sanctions don't get anywhere and the West fears Iranian rockets, satellites and potential nuclear bombs, it must move Iran to enter negotiations. This will work only if the result of the talks - a suspension of uranium enrichment -- is not made a precondition for their resumption."

Frankfurter Allgemeine editorialized: "Although the Iranian president claimed the launch was supposed to serve civilian and research purposes, it shows that the development of Iranian rockets is making disturbing progress, despite international sanctions.... Those who can launch rockets into space will sooner or later be able to arm them with nuclear warheads."

Sueddeutsche commented: "The launch of the satellite boosts the confidence of the Iranians. Their country is thereby the ninth nation that enters space. Militarily, this strong-man act does not change much for the time being.... Without a nuclear warhead, the modern long-range missile is not much more than a flying bomb like the German V2 in the Second World War."

FT Deutschland opined: "A few months before the presidential elections in Iran, the West cannot do much more than monitor the situation and stay calm. It is still unclear who will have the best prospects this summer and who will be supported by the religious leadership, which will decide the issue. But one thing is clear: almost every candidate would be better than the cynical gambler Ahmadinejad."

13. Transatlantic Relations

All media reported on Secretary Clinton and Foreign Minister Steinmeier's meeting in Washington, saying that "Germany and the United States want to cooperate more closely after the changeover in the White House" (Frankfurter Allgemeine). None of the German media carried any editorials. Tagesspiegel carried a front-page photo showing Secretary Clinton and Foreign Minister Steinmeier during a friendly conversation near a fireplace under the headline "New Coziness."

Most media reported that Secretary Clinton thanked Germany for its contribution in Afghanistan and quoted her as saying: "We need our closest allies, like Germany, to help us ensure the success and stability of the Afghan nation at this very important moment." FAZ headlined: "Mrs. Clinton Praises Germany." Tagesspiegel commented: "Regardless of whether the fight can be won with more soldiers, it is clear that specific demands will be made on Germany. And a German government that sees opportunities for a transatlantic partnership will not be able to resist them forever."

Sueddeutsche remarked: "While the Europeans, Miliband and Steinmeier, were the first foreigners to pay a visit, it became clear yesterday that Clinton's first visit abroad will not go to Europe but Asia."

14. Danger Of Protectionism

In a report under the headline: "Buy American," Sueddeutsche Zeitung wrote: "The World is alarmed. The United States is developing the biggest economic stimulus program ever with a volume of 819 billion dollar and now members of Congress want to limit its effects on the domestic economy. The global shock at these protectionist exercises in Congress is understandable because it was American tariffs that considerably contributed to the escalation of the global economic crisis in 1930."

The head of the SPD group in the European Parliament (EP), Martin Schulz criticized U.S. efforts to include a "buy American" clause in the U.S. economic stimulus package in Sueddeutsche Zeitung. He said: "Protectionism has never resolved any economic problem," and added: "All those who have celebrated Barack Obama as redeemer are now beginning to realize that he is only the American president." The head of the CDU group in the EP, Werner Langen, said this clause leads to an "absolutely wrong track that can lead to a disaster for the global economy"

Frankfurter Allgemeine argued: "The real test for transatlantic relations is now looming in trade policies. What Congress plans to write into the economic stimulus bill is pure protectionism. During normal times it is troublesome enough, but in a crisis it is really dangerous. Even during his election campaign, Barack Obama's statements were ambiguous. If he now thinks that he must repay important Democratic election groups for their support of his election campaign with protectionism, this would be a bad omen. It would undermine his claim to lead."

Handelsblatt argued: "Instead of internationally coordinating their economic and financial policies, each state acts according to the motto: 'charity begins at home.' The consequence is a new financial protectionism that could throw back the globalization of credit and capital markets for years to come. A relapse into protectionism of the 1930s would only exacerbate the crisis and would work to the detriment of all sides. With respect to crisis management, we need new international rules of the game that will protect us from economic stupidities. The fact that the European Central Bank and the European Commission are now working on uniform guidelines for state 'life vests' is an encouraging sign. The upcoming G-20 summit must make clear to all that the fight against financial

protectionism is not a favor to friends but that their own interests are also involved."

15. President Obama Approaches Muslims, Guantanamo Closure

FT Deutschland comments on President Obama's upcoming address to the Muslim world. The paper comments that it would be better to deliver the speech in a city faraway in the Arab world. "One alternative that is named in Washington and that would suit Obama is Indonesia. He spent many years of his childhood there, which would go down well in the Muslim world. However, this would, as some people say, offend Arabs and would reduce the significance of his engagement in the region.... Despite all reservations, by approaching the country with the largest Muslim population Obama would show that the Muslim world goes far beyond northern Africa and the Arab world."

According to Frankfurter Allgemeine, "The 'Guantanamo model' has never been a good idea. The establishment of the camp outside of U.S. territory served the purpose of putting the people who were imprisoned there outside of the law. The question is what now? In the past, prisoners were released in the course of the time. Obviously, [the U.S.] did not have anything in its hands against them, which, in turn demonstrates: there is no way around a court decision about the fate of the remaining prisoners. In this situation, Europe, including, Germany must now take sides. It is true that the responsibility is clear: America must heal this wound on its own. But this offers Germany the opportunity not to act as a know-it-all but to exert influence on the future joint fight against terror. One thing is clear: Germans and Europeans have not found the philosopher's stone either when it comes to handling dangerous Islamists. The key to the still abstract danger [of terrorism] is based on intensified cooperation of intelligence services, but also on criminal law that bans calls for hatred and murder and the links among terrorist. Courts can send those, who are a permanent danger for life and limb of others, to prisons. This can also happen in Germany. Guantanamo is superfluous."

16. Financial Crisis Hits Russia

Sueddeutsche Zeitung noted that people in Vladivostok took to the streets to protest the government's decision to impose tariffs on foreign cars, and the paper wondered: "Are these the first cracks in the vertical Russian power structure? Could the crisis succeed in achieving something that neither U.S. neo-cons nor European human rights activities, let alone Russia's opposition, achieved, namely, to bring to collapse Putin-style authoritarianism? The Russian economy is in bad shape and nothing has happened to improve it. Russia is once again faced with an enormous redistribution of wealth. One of the most exciting questions will be whether the people or the elites will begin to rebel, or whether the Putin system will begin to crumble from the bottom or blow up at the top. It is very likely that racist excesses will increase...and it is one of the tragic continuities of Russia's history that the Kremlin resolves social and political conflicts with violence. With such an approach the authoritarian system could also be replaced - by a dictatorship."

In the view of Handelsblatt, "Prime Minister Putin boasted in a defiant and unrealistic way at the Global Economic Forum about the alleged strengths of his vast empire. But pride goes before a fall.

And Russia is currently falling in a breathtaking speed. The reason no reason to show any pride. Especially the fall of the ruble must ring the alarm bells in Moscow and Putin's fate depends on it. He is building a regime that can be summarized under the formula: "Greater prosperity against less freedom." Putin's power rests on the support of bankers, brokers, car dealers, and boutique owners, the middle class that has profited the most from the upswing. But the deeper the ruble falls, the greater the problems of this population group. The ruble crash has all the ingredients to seriously question Putin's regime."

17. Turkey-Israeli Relations

Die Welt noted: "Recep Tayyip Erdogan's irritating statements and activities not only raise questions about his self control but also about the western orientation of his country. Erdogan's (most recent) slogans have blown up the framework of what is acceptable. Maybe Erdogan's flight from Davos will be compared to Vladimir

Putin's aggressive speech at Munich's Security Conference two years ago: that global politics has changed. It may be possible that Turkey's long path to the West, on which Ataturk embarked long ago, will end in Davos. During the seven years of ACP rule, Turkey has become more Islamic and more oriental. There is no other NATO country where the attitude towards NATO and the U.S. has been so negative. And the enthusiasm for Europe has also dried up. Turkey's significance for Europe has always been its role as double bridgehead: as a Muslim country in the West and as a Western country in the Muslim world. If Erdogan is now spreading an anti-Western mood and turns Turkey into a country that is more hostile to Israel than its Arab neighbors, it will forfeit its role as a mediator between Orient and Occident. Under Erdogan's leadership, Turkey is losing its special role and thus its value for the West."

19. Controversy Over Pope Benedict

All German media carried prominent reports and editorials on Chancellor Merkel's criticism of the Pope's decision to rehabilitate the Society of Pius, calling on the Vatican to clarify its position. "Merkel demands clarification from the Pope," (lead story headline in Die Welt, front-page headlines in Sueddeutsche and Frankfurter Allgemeine).

ARD-TV's Tagesthemen commented: "This is the most serious crisis in confidence in the Catholic Church for a long time and only Pope Benedict can resolve it... For the sake of democratic peace, the Catholic Church must not allow any ambiguity and denial [of the Holocaust]. Pope Benedict is not an anti-Semite... It is therefore right to call on the Pope to publicly state this. It is not a disgrace but strength to admit mistakes. Rarely before has a supposedly internal decision of the church had such a devastating effect on religions and society like the lifting of this excommunication. Not just German Catholics but every citizen is expecting the Pope to speak clearly."

ZDF-TV's Heute said: "Chancellor Merkel is of the opinion that this is not an internal matter of the church. The denial of the Holocaust goes to the heart of German-Israeli relations and Merkel believes that a German state leader must not be quiet about it.... She would have criticized the Pope equally strongly even if he were not German. Whenever the Holocaust is denied, Germany must be the defender of the victims. Her firm demand shows that she is not satisfied with the current statements of the Vatican."

Frankfurter Allgemeine's front-page editorial said: "Pope Benedict has not just rehabilitated somebody who denied the Holocaust, which should never have happened. He offered Bishops close companionship who do not believe in the principle of the church and who are leading a movement that rejects democracy. The damage done to the Church in general and the Pope's office in particular is immeasurable."

Sueddeutsche Zeitung noted: "The dialogue with Protestants and the talks with Jews and Muslims has been damaged.... Angela Merkel, the Christian Democrat chancellor, is right. We need a crystal-clear clarification from Rome. The disappointment over this Pope is increasing."

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